House Republican Hits Partisan Showings

Dallas Democrats Agree Not to Use Kennedy Film as Party Fund-Raiser

By Andrew J. Glass 9/21/66
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Dallas Democrats agreed under pressure yesterday not to use a Government-produced film about John F. Kennedy for Party fund-raising in the city of his assassination.

The feature-length film, "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," will still be shown Thursday evening at a $5-a-seat gala in Dallas. But its Democratic sponsors promised that all the proceeds will go to a charity, probably the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington.

The latest flap over the Kennedy movie erupted as Rep. Albert H. Quie (R-Minn.) demanded in a House speech that the Johnson Administration move to halt partisan showings, such as the one planned by the Greater Dallas Democratic Club.

Quie reported that he had informed the Justice Department about the Dallas affair but complained that the Government's lawyers were not "being aggressive enough."

"Years of Lightning, Day of Drums" is scheduled to be shown in 91 theaters across the country before the November elections. Last year, Congress passed a law permitting commercial domestic screenings of the movie, originally produced by the United States Information Agency for overseas distribution.

USIA sold the film to the Kennedy Center for $120,000, which in turn licensed Joseph L. Levine's Embassy Pictures Corp. to distribute the film for a $150,000 advance and promotion guarantees totaling another $300,000.

In clearing the picture for general U.S. distribution, a House report asserted that "the film ought not to be used . . . for partisan political fund raising."

On Sept. 12, The Dallas Morning News quoted Myron Hauser, president of the Dallas Democratic club, as saying "the funds we raise by showing the movie will go to support all Democratic candidates

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Dallas Party Yields on JFK Film

here and a portion of the funds will go to the Kennedy Center."

Hauser told a Quie aide yesterday morning that the funds would be split 50-50—whereupon the Republican lawmaker prepared a speech denouncing use of the movie as a "political tool."

This triggered a fast flurry of telephone calls and telegrams between Dallas and Washington. By late afternoon, Hauser had sent a telegram to Ralph Becker, general counsel of the Kennedy Center and a Republican, pledging that "the net proceeds for the engagement will be used for charitable purposes and not otherwise."

Becker felt the Dallas showing, as originally planned, not only violated Congressional intent but also was "in poor taste." Mr. Kennedy was slain in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

Three screenings of the Kennedy film were recently canceled by the Kennedy Center when it was revealed that money raised at the performances would have gone to Democratic candidates. Benefits were called off in Des Moines and Waterloo, Iowa, for Senatorial candidate E. B. Smith and in Milwaukee for John Buckley, a Democratic contender for Congress.

A film-based political fund-raising venture is still scheduled by Democrats in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, near Akron, on Sept. 28. If the Democratic county chairman there refuses further pleas to drop the partisan showing, the contract will be canceled, Becker said.